

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L ABU DHABI 000256

SIPDIS

NEA/FO, NEA/ARPI, NEA/ELA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/25/2016

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SY](#) [AE](#)

SUBJECT: BASHAR'S EXPECTED TRAVEL TO GULF

REF: SECSTATE 11443

Classified By: DCM Martin Quinn, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (C) On January 25, DCM presented reftel points to MFA Asst U/S Tariq Al-Haidan (former UAE Ambassador to Syria). He seemed surprised at the subject of the demarche but indicated that he had heard nothing at all of a proposed visit by Bashar Al-Asad. Al-Haidan alluded to Bashar's recent consultations with the Saudis, Egyptians and Qataris, but took careful note of our point that Syria would be inclined to exploit the opportunity of a UAE visit. Although observing that Syria had no choice but to cooperate with the West and with the UNIIC investigation, he implied that the UAEG might be hard pressed (based on the rules of Arab hospitality) to refuse a formal visit request by another Arab head of state. Syria, he noted, was in a much weaker position than Iran.

2. (C) He commented that the Syrian Deputy Foreign Minister during a recent visit to UAE told him that Syria was "fully ready to cooperate with the Americans, even to the point of putting U.S. forces on its border with Iraq." On former Syrian VP Khaddam's recent statements, he stated that Khaddam's views are personal, based on his own grievance, and have no ideological foundation.

3. (C) Pressed on Syria's lamentable record of human rights violations at home and support for terror groups abroad, Al-Haidan expressed the conviction that Syria would eventually move toward internal reform in 2-3 years once the old guard of Asad Senior departed the scene. He expressed concern that continued Western pressure on a weakened Syrian government might result in toppling one of the region's secular regimes.

4. (C) Comment: UAE Ambassador-designate to Washington, Saqr Ghobash, told PolChief two weeks ago that the Al-Nahyan ruling family of Abu Dhabi became friends with Bashar when their respective fathers were alive and running their countries. This explains why this generation of Al-Nahyans is reluctant to apply too much pressure on Bashar. Given this, UAE is not likely to refuse a Bashar visit, but may not go too far in endorsing him.

SISON